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The Martyr President.

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THE MARTYR PRESIDENT.

Our Grief and Our Duty.

Lincolniana

BY J. G. BUTLER,
PASTOR OF ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH.

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LETTER OF REQUEST.

WASHINGTON, *April* 17, 1865.

REV. J. G. BUTLER

DEAR SIR: The undersigned members and friends of your church and congregation, who listened to the earnest, patriotic, and eloquent address, called forth by the foul assassination of President Lincoln, delivered by you in St. Paul's Church on Easter morning, 16th instant, and regretting that a report of the same which appeared in the papers was so meager and unsatisfactory, most respectfully request a copy for publication, in pamphlet form, that the expressed desire of many to preserve it may be gratified, and with a firm belief that the cause of good government and pure and undefiled religion will be subserved by a wider dissemination of the great truths so ably and fully set forth therein.

J. A. RHEEM,
JOS. F. KELLEY,
A. F. WILLIAMS,
A. C. SPAULDING,
CHAS. PITCHER,
W. H. SIGSTON,
C. LEPLEY,
THOMAS CRUX,
J. G. WEAVER,
J. H. REISS,
A. NOERR,
A. S. PRATT,
A. HOWLAND LEE,
S. A. PEUGH,
G. W. MARTIN,
N. ACKER,
M. M. ROHRER,
WM. H. FRY,
J. N. BURKET,
J. H. KUEHLING,
LEWIS HEYL.

REPLY.

GENTLEMEN: The discourse for which you so kindly ask was wholly extemporaneous, inspired by the deep grief which so suddenly overwhelmed our nation. I have, amid pressing duties, hastily endeavored to reproduce it. The times call for earnest thoughts and earnest men. When the

nation's life is in danger, *silence* is treason. God has wrought wonderful deliverances for us; and though the strife of the battle-field be well nigh ended, the *great sin* which has occasioned all this blood yet struggles for being. If my voice or life can in any degree strengthen our Government and promote Truth and Freedom, I am not my own, but yours and Truth's and Christ's. The manuscript is at your disposal.

I am, gentlemen, very truly, for God and our country, yours,

J. G. BUTLER,
Pastor of St. Paul's Church.

St. Paul's Parsonage, *April* 24, 1865.

To Messrs. J. A. Rheem, J. F. Kelley, A. Noerr, A. S. Pratt, Dr. A. H. Lee, and others.

OUR GRIEF AND OUR DUTY.

The Gospel for the day from the 24th Chapter of Luke was read.

These badges of mourning, in the Sanctuary to-day, direct our thoughts to the terrible tragedy which has filled our city, our whole land, with sorrow. And though this be our Communion season, I feel that the improvement of this sad Providence furnishes the theme of discourse to-day. I am inadequate to the occasion My heart has been well nigh paralyzed by the startling Providence. I feel that I am in deep sympathy with you, and with the loyal heart of this entire land. Even treason will blush with shame at this assassination. I would prefer to be silent to-day—to commingle my tears with those of the stricken household —with the tears of the great American people. I would prefer to hear others speak—to be still, and suffer God alone to speak; but rebellion and treason have culminated in the murder of our beloved and noble Chief Magistrate. This is not the time to be silent. I would be untrue to you, untrue to myself as a citizen of this great Republic, as an Ambassador of truth, a servant of Christ, untrue to the promptings of my own deeply moved heart, unworthy the confidence and love you have ever reposed in me, did I fail to speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

This is resurrection day; the day upon which the Church, during all her history, commemorates the rising from the grave of Him, who, but the third day before, had been crucified. In this drapery we have combined here to-day the emblems of sorrow and of joy. Nature is putting on her Easter robes—the grass is beginning to spring forth, the buds to swell, the leaves are unfolding, and the trees are covered with their varied blooms. After the long and dreary nights of winter, all nature has revived, and holds forth

to our admiring eyes an immense bouquet, filling the air with fragrance and the soul with gladness.

These weeds of mourning, reminding us of the murder of our honored President on the *Crucifixion day* of our now risen Lord, are appropriately wreathed with beautiful flowers, preachers of the resurrection, entwined with evergreen, pointing to an immortality in a tearless land

The plotting enemies of our glorious Redeemer supposed the nailing to the Cross ended all pretensions to the establishment of His kingdom among the kingdoms of earth. Unable to resist the power of His truth, they vainly hoped to bury all—even his very memory—in the new made, rock-bound sepulchre. Our Lord crucified, His own friends—His chosen disciples, gave up all for lost. We supposed, said they, that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel. They were looking for the yoke of the Roman oppressor to be broken; but, their Lord put to death, every one in despair went to his own home. The Church to-day—this Christian congregation—the whole Church Catholic, in our land, in all lands, with her Bible, her Ministry, her thousand agencies for good, snows how false were the hopes, and how groundless the fears of enemies and friends.

Though our beloved Chief Magistrate lies in the chilling embrace of death to day, and our honored Prime Minister of State lingers in pain beneath the assassin's blow, our Government still lives. *Men may die*—be murdered—but *truth never*. Jesus may, by wicked hands, be crucified, but His cause lives. That is a part of God's plan. Abraham Lincoln has fallen a martyr to truth, to principle, to freedom, to law and order, and good Government. But whilst our hearts are bleeding, our hopes are not crushed This foul deed of the assassin, upon which Heaven frowns, and of which Satan would be ashamed, may fill the land with mourning; but it nerves the heart with fresh resolve and more invincible purpose to contend for the truth, even at the price of life. We have been laying upon our country's altar our most precious treasure. It is all covered with the blood of our husbands and fathers, and sons and brothers—coined into the price of liberty. And now, when rebellion is well nigh crushed, when our armies, flushed with victory, are pursuing a fleeing foe, treason nerves her fiendish

arm to strike down our Moses, who, under God, has led us through the wilderness, as he stands upon Pisgah, in full view of the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

The most guilty of the murderers of our Lord were not the men who made the Cross, or plaited the crown of thorns, or drove the nails, or thrust the spear; not the Centurion and his hundred men, as they guarded that innocent victim of hellish malice. *They* were the least guilty. They were but the hand of the power that enacted and expounded the law. Judas was guilty. Herod was guilty. Pilate was guilty—the Sanhedrim, with Caiphas, the Chief Priests, and Scribes; the populace, crying "Crucify, crucify Him"—these all were guilty. Their pride and envy, and malice and revenge, were all embodied, *vitalized*, in that one act, the murder of the King of the Jews.

The poor, miserable, wicked assassin, whose name is not worthy of mention, though he has gone out with a mark deeper than the mark of Cain upon him, and who cannot escape the justice that awaits him, was but the representation and instrument of the enemies of the Heaven-blessed Government, whose Head they have stricken down.

Our father's God, to Thee,
Author of Liberty,

though crushed and humbled in the very dust, to Thee we lift our hearts with confidence, and hope, and thanksgiving, that though the great, and good, and wise man whom Thou did'st give us, to govern, has been stricken down, the people, the government, the eternal principles of Truth, and Freedom, and Righteousness, *still live*.

I call you to witness to-day, my brethren, that this pulpit has offered no uncertain sound, during these four years of treason and blood. Neither by *silence*—for *silence* is treason, when the life of the nation is endangered—by thought, look, word, or act, has your pastor given aid and comfort to that thirst for power which has culminated in the murder of Abraham Lincoln. The loyalty of this pulpit has not been begotten amid the victorious battles of our noble men by land and by sea, nor in the presence of the crumbling ruins of rebellion. But the position of your pastor to-day is what it was at the firing of the first gun

upon our glorious flag of Sumter. Though Southern by birth, and by residence, during his entire ministry, his loyalty is not a thing of prejudice or passion, but takes its inspiration from this blessed *Book*, which teaches us to *obey Magistrates, and that the powers that be are ordained of God.* I thank God to-day, that I have had no part nor lot in this matter; that He enabled me, in the dark days of our national struggle, when the faint-hearted warned me, and the disloyal hated, and forsook my ministry, that God gave me strength and courage to speak the truth. No man has ever weakened the arm of the government and given courage to the enemy from the inspiration of this sacred desk. This pulpit is in no sense chargeable with the blood of Abraham Lincoln.

When aroused from my midnight slumbers, by the alarming intelligence, that our President had been assassinated—even now we can scarcely realize that he, from whose facile pen we were but a few days since receiving despatches of victories; whose pleasant, placid face is so familiar to many of us; who has just been telling us, and the nation, and the world, of prospective peace, and speaking healing words, words of gentleness and forbearance, and forgiveness and love, healing the deep wounds of the nation's heart; the tender and earnest Intercessor, pleading with us, who have given our very life-blood to save Truth, and Freedom, and Government, entreating us to forgive our enemies, and forget the strong blows aimed at our very vitals—that *he* should be stricken down, the *friend* of the offending rebel, we can hardly realize. Yet it is so. His tall, manly form lies in the cold embrace of death to-day; and as we stand weeping over his mortal remains, the heart of the nation is nerved with new purpose to suppress, at every cost, this costly rebellion, and remove from the land *that* which has given it inspiration and life. But for that, rebellion would never have had being. *This* inspires the pride and tyranny which would make every will subject to its own, which must *rule or ruin.* The verdict of the American people to-day, as it looks upon the spilled blood of the great Champion of human rights, the friend of the oppressed, the emancipator of four millions of bondmen, is, that the land must be *free*—an open Bible, a free pulpit, a free press, free speech, a free people.

These millions, enamored of their chains, may, as the delivered Israelites in their straits, murmur against Mo-es and against God, and say, would God we had remained in bondage. We may not be able to answer all the hard questions which may arise as to our duty towards the freedman, though God, who has accomplished their deliverance, will teach us; but the one purpose is formed, that the whole land must be free. The voices of God and of the people are one in this verdict. His work is done. I thank God that his sun was not eclipsed during the dark days of our history, when clouds appeared to gather around our starry banner; but when it floated upon the soil of every rebel State—all covered with glory—when the clouds are rolling away and peace is rapidly rising to the zenith. He longed to see this day. He saw, and was glad. Ah! yes, and though our hearts are sad to-day we are glad too—thankful that God gave us so good, so wise, so humane a ruler, and spared him to us so long, crowning his government with the prospect of an early, a righteous, and permanent peace.

Our blessed Lord, once called to the death chamber in the Ruler's house, said of the maid, "not *dead*, but sleepeth." And these words of Jesus, on this resurrection day, inspire hope as we stand in the presence of the lifeless Ruler now. *Not dead;* no, he is not dead. He needs no marble shaft to perpetuate his memory, to tell future generations that he lived. He lives not only in the hearts of the four millions of freedmen, from whom he has broken the shackles of bondage, but in the heart of this entire nation his name is embalmed in honor and love. In all future history this name will stand beside that of Washington. If he was the father of his country, under God, Abraham Lincoln was its *saviour*. He sleeps, as we have reason to know, not an unbeliever, but as one who feared God and wrought righteousness. He lives where the martyred men of all ages live—we believe, where the Great Martyr, our Lord Jesus, lives—in that heavenly City, whose air is not pregnant with treason and malice and death; but, where the heart, cleansed and inspired by the blood and spirit of Jesus, is in perfect and eternal sympathy with the great Redeemer, whose name is *love*. May these precious memories and hopes sustain and comfort his stricken widow and fatherless

children. May the heavy affliction be sanctified by Him who makes all things to work together for good, and makes even the wrath of man to praise Him.

In a government other than Republican, the assassination of its Head might paralyze its energies or incite revolution. But the affairs of the Republic roll on to-day steadily—guided, under God, by a true and loyal heart, and by an arm strong and resolute. Sustained by the patriotism and wisdom of the nation, as well as by the prayers of God's people, though our joy has been turned into sorrow, the future, inspired by holy resolve, is no less hopeful and bright than when the whole land was flushed with victory. The patriot and christian heart of the nation should, and will, now encourage and make strong the arm of the President of the United States, whilst we embalm in memory the surpassing worth of the fallen Chieftain.

In partaking of this bread and wine, we are carried back to the *Betrayal night*. And here, in the most solemn manner, we renew our consecration to our Divine King. This is a consecration act. We say by it that we are not our own—that we belong to Jesus, who redeemed us by the price of His own blood—that henceforth we are to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us. As we approach this table to-day, is it not proper, with the remembrance of the spilled blood of this great human Representative of truth and freedom, and humanity and love, before us, that we come as *patriot* Christians, renewing *first* our allegiance to Jesus, *then* to our country—first to the Cross, then to our Flag. The times in which we live call for earnest consecration to Jesus in the cause of our country. Our land has a mission. Our whole history shows God's hand with us. We are to teach the world the Bible taught truth, that *man is capable of self-government*. We are to be the light of the world. In the light of our life the thrones of despots will tremble, and the power of the oppressor be broken. Drawing our patriotism, and philanthropy, and religion from this great fountain of Divine Truth, we are to proclaim to the nations of the earth, through a free pulpit, a free press, free schools, and free people, the truth which only the despot in Church or State fears; and the oppressor ought to fear and tremble, for he is weighed in the balance and is found wanting.

But that our mission may be fulfilled, we must be a *consecrated people*—a people consecrated to the great principles of free government—to the teachings of Jesus, who came not only "to preach the Gospel to the poor, and heal the broken hearted, but to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound."

"Hail to the *Lord's anointed*,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun.
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.
He comes with succor speedy,
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in His sight."

The Church—the whole body of *believers*, of every name—is the living representative of Jesus in a rebel world, to teach the truth He taught, to live the life He lived, and, if need be, to die the death He died, that the kingdom of ignorance, and oppression, and sin may be destroyed.

The bloody struggle of the past four years, of which this tragic deed is one of the closing acts, is full of significance. Nations, as well as individuals, may have their second birth—*must be born again*—before they are prepared for a pure, vigorous, and useful manhood. Our nation *has* been born again, amid the terrible carnage of the battle-field, and baptized by the tears and blood of the entire land. Our noblest sons have been laid upon the great sacrificial altar. Heaven—the God of truth and justice and mercy, the God of battles—has accepted the offering, and now, as we rise to the purity and dignity and responsibility of our renewed nationality, we must offer this last sacrifice, and thank God that our President's dying eyes rested, not upon the ruins of a once mighty Republic, but upon the land redeemed, regenerated, ennobled, prepared for the great mission upon which the King of Kings sends her forth.

We have come forth, not enfeebled by the death agony through which we have passed, but *stronger* than when we entered upon our life trial. God has smiled upon the nation in her noble struggle. Agriculture, manufactures, commerce, religion, all share the divine blessing. A flood of prosperity has rolled over us, in which we are in danger of forgetting God. And yet the religious life of the land has never been so vigorous—our sanctuaries thronged, our treasuries full, souls converted, and the whole Church aroused from her lethargy and pouring forth her treasure and talent not only in strengthening the bulwarks of Zion, but, above all, in ministering to the wants, bodily and spiritual, of our brave defenders, and even remembering those whose parricidal hand aimed a death blow at the very vitals of our Government.

The life of the nation is healthy, vigorous, to-day—nerved with holy resolve.

As the war-cloud rolls away from the rebel States, we shall witness the desolations of civil strife. Not only are governments disorganized, but the Church, too, needs reconstruction. The Southern pulpit, forgetting the Apostolic injunction, has fired the Southern heart and strengthened the arm of the rebel government, by preaching treason and resistance to rightful authority. The terrible desolations of civil war have swept over these States. All is disorder there, in the family, the church, and the government.

In the midst of our sorrow to-day, our hearts should overflow with thanksgiving that the hand of the destroyer has not paralyzed the arm of our industry nor polluted our altars. A glance at our Southern land shows what our cities and towns would be had the boast of the destroyer been realized, and the slave roll been called upon Bunker Hill. But God has given us the victory, blessed be His holy name! Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end!

We must now address ourselves, as patriot Christians, to the duties of the hour. It is ours to strengthen the arm of the *Executive*, to encircle him with our sympathies, our confidence, and our prayers. It is ours to remember the brave men who have stood as a wall of fire between us and our enemies; to care for the

widow and orphan of the slain soldier; to feed the hungry and clothe the naked of our country's enemies; to educate and elevate, so far as sanctified knowledge can elevate, the four millions of freedmen from whom the fetters have been broken, by the wise counsel of our President and the valor of our arms; to raise to new life the Church, wounded, sundered, bleeding, dying, amid the flames of rebellion; to teach the people to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's—not to revenge and exasperate, but to forgive, to heal, to help, and bind in one common brotherhood all the States of this Union—to kill the fatted calf upon the return of the penitent, needy, and humbled prodigal. Though the diabolical hand of the assassin has felled the noble President, around whom the heart of the nation gathered, in this work of reconciliation and healing, revenge must not fire our heart. But whilst the dignity of the law and the honor of the Government must be vindicated, the spirit of the fallen One, his humanity, his forbearance, his slowness to wrath, his love of peace, must animate our hearts. Our erring brethren, whilst being taught that treason is *crime*, must yet know that only the love of order and peace insists upon its penalty; that justice is tempered with mercy; that righteousness and peace may kiss each other.

In the memorial of our Saviour's death, and with these emblems of our national sorrow, we must anew consecrate ourselves to-day to these works of Christian philanthropy. Though we be not able to see alike upon all the great questions that have agitated the land, yet with treason and rebellion concentrated in the fell blow of the assassin, as patriots and Christians we must forget our differences, and rise superior to our prejudices. We must meet the issues of the day as *men*, planting ourselves upon the Bible, as we stand beside the Cross, and unfurl our starry banner, now draped in mourning, with the undying resolve, that, in God's name, *the right shall triumph, though our own blood pay the price.*

God has taught us, during this struggle, what we can do, when deeply in earnest. The Christian and the patriot, sparing not their own sons, have, with them, freely given of their treasure and labor to bind up the wounds and pour in oil and wine. The millions of treasure that have cheered our suffering soldiers may

now be expended to restore the ruin of war and heal heart wounds which have estranged the North and the South. There is not before us a season of rest, though the clash of arms is soon to cease, but of labor—self-denying, constant, and earnest. The work so auspiciously begun, so successfully prosecuted by our martyred President, must be carried on, until the world shall enjoy that freedom wherewith Christ makes the people free.

The adage is no more trite than true, that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The disciples scattered, during the first century, by the persecution and martyrdom of our Lord, and His defenceless ones, did not go with sealed lips, but opened their mouth boldly, declaring the truth. And with our land regenerated by fire, the arm of the oppressor broken, our noble and beloved Leader slain, shall not our tongue be fired with holy zeal, not for party, nor section, but for *truth*? Shall loyalty be timid and shrinking in the presence of treason? Shall freedom hide her head for fear of the oppressor? Shall the press be fearful and compromising? Shall the pulpit give an uncertain sound in this day of battle? Though the atmosphere be poisoned with the miasm of oppression and treason, if *this* sacred desk fail to speak forth the truth in love, may my heart forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

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